



**EDUKASIA ISLAMIKA**  
**Jurnal Pendidikan Islam**  
Vol.8 No.1 June 2023, hlm. 97-116  
P-ISSN: 2548-723X; E-ISSN: 2548-5822

**Religious Moderation in the Land of Syari'a: Christian Women's Resistance in Acehese Education Institutions**

**Mustamar Iqbal Siregar<sup>1</sup>, Bahtiar<sup>2</sup>, Mhd Rasid Ritonga<sup>3</sup>**

Chairman of the Religious Moderation House of IAIN Langsa, Aceh<sup>1</sup>, Prodi Komuniskasi Penyiaran Islam (KPI), Fakultas Ushuluddin, Adab dan Dakwah, IAIN Langsa, Aceh<sup>2</sup>, University of Canberra, Australia

[mustamariqbalsiregar@iainlangsa.ac.id](mailto:mustamariqbalsiregar@iainlangsa.ac.id), [mrlungs@yahoo.com](mailto:mrlungs@yahoo.com), [Rasid.Ritonga@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Rasid.Ritonga@canberra.edu.au)<sup>3</sup>

\*Correspondence: e-mail: [mustamariqbalsiregar@iainlangsa.ac.id](mailto:mustamariqbalsiregar@iainlangsa.ac.id)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v8i1.7122>

Received: 7 Mar 2023

Revised: 8 May 2023

Approved: 18 June 2023

Available Online: 25 June 2023

**Abstrak**

Sebagai kawasan penerapan syari'at Islam sekaligus pemeluk mayoritas Muslim paling absolut di Indonesia, Aceh merupakan salah satu lokus yang paling eksotis dalam riset dan kajian-kajian tentang moderasi beragama. Terlebih dalam data awal ditemukan bahwa terdapat kecenderungan upaya untuk mendorong moderasi beragama tersebut melalui kelompok minoritas Kristen khususnya kaum perempuan di Aceh. Dengan menggunakan teori James C. Scott tentang *public transcript* (perlawanan terbuka) dan *hidden transcript* (perlawanan tertutup) dan didukung teori fungsionalisme, tulisan ini memotret bagaimana perlawanan fungsional perempuan Kristen dalam menuntut hak identitas dan belajar agama sendiri di lembaga-lembaga pendidikan di Aceh, yang secara khusus difokuskan pada dua lokasi yakni Kota Langsa dan Banda Aceh. Melalui riset dengan metodologi kualitatif yang mendasarkan sumber data dari hasil wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi ini ditemukan bahwa perempuan Kristen dalam memperjungkan identitasnya pada lembaga-lembaga pendidikan di Aceh terjadi dalam dua fase perlawanan yakni *hidden transcript* (perlawanan tertutup) dan *public transcript* (perlawanan terbuka). Selanjutnya dalam hal resistensi dalam perjuangan hak untuk belajar agama sendiri di lembaga pendidikan dilakukan dengan *public transcript* (perlawanan terbuka). Terakhir, ditemukan pula bahwa perempuan merupakan makhluk sosial yang paling efektif menjalankan fungsionalitasnya dalam mewujudkan moderasi beragama. Karenanya tulisan ini merekomendasikan supaya Pemerintah melalui Kementerian Agama mempertimbangkan format perempuan sebagai agen moderasi beragama.

**Kata Kunci:** Moderasi Beragama, Resistensi, dan Perempuan

**Abstract**

As an area for implementing Islamic law as well as having the most absolute Muslim majority in Indonesia, Aceh is one of the most exotic loci in research and studies on religious moderation. Especially in the initial data it was found that there was a tendency

to encourage religious moderation through Christian minority groups, especially women in Aceh. By using James C. Scott's theory of public transcript (open resistance) and hidden transcript (closed resistance) and supported by functionalism theory, this paper portrays how the functional resistance of Christian women in demanding the right to identity and self-study of religion in educational institutions in Aceh, specifically focused on two locations, namely Langsa City and Banda Aceh. Through research using a qualitative methodology based on data sources from interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that Christian women fighting for their identity in educational institutions in Aceh occurred in two phases of resistance, namely hidden transcript (closed resistance) and public transcript (open resistance). Furthermore, in terms of resistance in the struggle for the right to study religion on their own in educational institutions, it is carried out with public transcripts (open resistance). Finally, it was also found that women are social beings who are most effective in carrying out their functionality in realizing religious moderation. Therefore, this paper recommends that the Government, through the Ministry of Religion, consider women's format as agents of religious moderation.

**Keywords:** *Religious Moderation, Resistance, and Women*

## INTRODUCTION

As an area for implementing Islamic law and having an absolute Muslim majority in Indonesia, Aceh is one of the most exotic loci in research and studies on religious moderation. Especially in the initial data, it was found that there was a tendency to encourage religious moderation through Christian minority groups, especially women in Aceh. For this reason, research on religious moderation is viewed from the perspective of the treatment of the majority group, on the other hand, the article entitled "Religious Moderation in the Land of Syari'a: Christian Women's Resistance in Acehese Education Institutions" sees the resistance of minorities as part of a support for religious moderation project in the public sphere of education in Aceh. By using James C. Scott's theory of public transcript and hidden transcript and supported by functionalism theory, this paper portrays how the functional resistance of Christian women in demanding the right to identity and self-study of religion in educational institutions in Aceh, specifically focused on two locations, namely Langsa City and Banda Aceh. Furthermore, in terms of resistance in the struggle for the right to study religion on their own in educational institutions, it is carried out with public transcripts. Finally, it was also found that women are social beings who are most effective in carrying out their functionality in realizing religious moderation.

This article highlights the face of religious moderation by looking at the resistance side of minority Christian women in fighting for their right to identity and self-learning of religion in the public sphere of education in Aceh. The right to identity and the right to

receive religious instruction according to one's religion are the two central rights that have so far experienced problems in the public voice of Aceh's education, especially in two cities, namely Langsa and Banda Aceh. Few people have had difficulty differentiating the identity of Christian and Muslim women in the public sphere of education. However, recently there has been an indication of good growth where a minority of Christian women have dared to appear without the hijab in the public sphere of education as a form of resistance. Likewise, the right to receive religious instruction by teachers of the same religion as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System cannot be fully implemented in Aceh. It shows that the face of religious moderation in Aceh is distinctive and cannot be equated with other regions in Indonesia.

Religious moderation, considered ideal for managing harmony in a multicultural society, has not been entirely accepted by the people of Aceh. Even domination between superordinate and subordinate groups still occurs there. In other words, the rights of minorities in Aceh's public sphere of education are still frequently taken away. Both in terms of the right to learn one's religion and the right to appear following one's identity, even though it has experienced rapid progress, it has inevitably created resistance. Interestingly, the resistance efforts of these minority groups are played by women.

Several previous studies that focused on the issue of religious moderation included Syamsun Ni'am (2015: 111-134) in "Pesantren: the Miniature of Moderate Islam in Indonesia", which tried to look at the basics of developing religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools; and Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal in "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation Through Islamic Higher Education institutions in Indonesia", which examines the pattern of mainstreaming religious moderation in several universities in Indonesia (Nasir & Rijal, 2021: 213-241). In addition, there is also Muhammad Parhan, et al., in "Model of Religious Moderation in Universities: Alternative Solutions To Liberal, Literal And Radical Islam" who seeks to establish a religious moderation-based learning model typical for universities to counteract the influence of different understandings. contradictory to the substance of Islamic teachings, such as extremist groups (Parhan et al., 2022: 1-23). Unfortunately, these three studies have not discussed religious moderation in terms of majority-minority interaction. Likewise, several previous studies on minority issues such as Muhammad Anzor dan Yaser Amri (2020) in "Being Christians in the Acehese Way: Illiberal Citizenship and Women's Agency in the Islamic Public Sphere"; Muhammad Anzor, "We Are Different!":

The Equality of Muslim and Christian Young Women in Langsa, Aceh (Ansor, 2014); and Muhammad Ansor, *Being Women in the Land of Syari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh* (Ansor, 2015a), have not connected it with the discourse of religious moderation. This article is a discussion that presents both, namely how the portrait of religious moderation in educational institutions in Aceh through tracking the traces of Christian women's resistance. This means that the functionalism of the social structure in realizing moderation in religion is not only solely through the majority group, but also the role of minority groups that is no less significant, women are no exception.

Amid an increasingly competitive global world, which is marked by the entry of a new wave called the era of disruption, where changes in the world occur so quickly, with a revolutionary movement called 4.0, the emergence of globalization, the development of science and technology, especially in the field of information technology, because it is feared can erode social values that grow amid society, then efforts to raise awareness on improving the quality of life through individual relationships with God as well as with fellow humans and the universe. Amid the modernization of science, which has consequences for increasing human literacy, it is also hoped that human awareness will increase in respecting the dignity and dignity of each person, establishing harmony between religious communities in society, guaranteeing equality and equal treatment of every citizen, no gender discrimination, and so on (Abdullah, 2020: 1).

The phenomenon of radicalism that has surfaced in the last two decades in Indonesia is a destructive implication of globalization and the development of information technology, which is worrisome for the future of world civilization, especially Indonesia. In the context of these agendas, religious figures, and thinkers in Indonesia, especially the Ministry of Religion, promote the concept of religious moderation as a solution and a value base.

Religious moderation is not a new thing in Indonesia. Moderation comes from the Latin word *moderatio* which means moderation or not exaggerating. In English, it is called moderation which means overage (average), core (core), standard (standard), or non-aligned (not taking sides). Whereas in Islam, moderation is often associated with the word *wasath*, *wasathiyah* which is equivalent to *tawasuth* (middle), *I'tidal* (fair), *tawazun* (balanced). Conceptually, religious moderation is the perspective and behavior of human diversity in the middle to maintain balance and fairness and not be extreme (Tim

Penyusun, 2019: 15-17). Therefore religious moderation had colored the historical journey of the nation's diversity in the far archipelago before the government campaigned for it (Onghokham, 1993: 154). This means that the religious pattern rooted in the archipelago emphasizes openness, balance, equality, justice, peace, cooperation, mutual assistance, and so on, similar to the substantive values of religious moderation. However, due to the influence of global ideology and possibly also due to domestic socio-political pressures, radicalized movements in Indonesia appear to carry religious legitimacy. Because of this, the concept of religious moderation that the government resonates with is just an attempt to revitalize the substantive values of religious teachings that have taken place historically in the archipelago so that the national fabric is not torn just because of the radicalism of a few irresponsible people.

Among several regions in Indonesia, Aceh is an area with challenges in realizing the concept of religious moderation. The absolute quantity of Muslim society there has the potential to trigger the emergence of radicalism in the form of acts of intolerance and discrimination against minorities. Not to mention the factor of the expansion of textualist religious understanding to form a rigid and strict shari'a format (qanun). As a result, although they are still being accommodated, the space for movement for minority groups is narrow. Fully fulfilling minority rights will be complex in Aceh. The ego of the majority will tend to demand adaptation of minorities rather than providing accommodation space for them.

Even so, it does not mean Aceh has no progress in tolerance. It's just that the progress of tolerance there is still running slowly. The survey stated that Banda Aceh City, the second most intolerant city in Indonesia, indicates that there are still many complex tasks in upholding tolerance in Aceh. However, little progress can be felt in the public sphere of Aceh's education. Acehnese educational institutions, especially at the tertiary level, are now used to the panorama of women not wearing the hijab. Even though they wear long skirts, that is better than hiding their religious identity by wearing a headscarf. The struggle in that direction, of course, necessitates the resistance of the minority group against the majority so that their rights can be fulfilled. Interestingly, the object of research chosen in this resistance struggle is Christian women. Why? First, the Christian group is the largest group among minorities. Second, the different identities of Christian women and the majority of Muslims make it easier to observe. Meanwhile, thirdly, resistance by women in general (including Christians) will minimize conflict and violence because

women are associated with "makhluk lunak" ("soft creatures"). Because of that, matters regarding how Christian women struggle to assert their identity, how Christian women resist demanding the right to study religion on their own, and how Christian women as agents of religious moderation will be explored further in this paper.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper departs from a study that explores Religious Moderation in Syariat Country: Christian Women's Resistance in Acehese Education Institutions using a qualitative research method based on descriptive-analytical field research. In this case, descriptive is a method used to describe a phenomenon, event, or events that occur around. While analysis is the process of interpreting the data found both in the form of events and text. So by using this method, the results of this study can be presented in the form of a clear description (Moleong, 1990: 6). To sharpen this description, this research uses analytical techniques which, according to Bogdan in Sugiono (2009), are a series of systematic search and compilation of data obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation. This analysis process is then, according to Miles and Huberman (1992: 16), carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

The Locus of this research was conducted in two cities, namely Langsa City and Banda Aceh. These two cities were chosen because they were considered to represent a portrait of events that occurred in Aceh's education world. In addition, the existence of Christian students and students in educational institutions in the two cities has increased every year. Meanwhile, because this research is extracting information through interviews, observation, and documentation, the informants in this study were selected based on a purposive sampling technique, often called a nonrandom technique, representing the qualifications of data requirements according to the desired criteria. Therefore, the informants in this study consisted of two people, namely Eva Ratu Gea, an alumnus of one of the state universities in Banda Aceh, and Mrs. Dista Br. Tambunan, a teacher at an elementary school in Langsa City. Both are key informants whose information will be explored through in-depth interviews regarding the process of Christian women's resistance in educational institutions in Aceh as a manifestation of the reality of religious moderation in a shari'a country. To ensure the validity of the data presented in this paper, the researcher cross-checked directly with the main informants for various information that was considered dubious. In addition, the researcher also tested the information

received with the results of the observed observations, whether there were similarities between the two or not.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Women and the Affirmation of Christian Identity

Recognition of everyone's identity is necessary to distinguish social groups in society. In several incidents, a situation is encountered where a group of people exist but are considered non-existent. Akhmad Siddiq in his writings "*Madurese Christian: In Search of Christian Identity within Muslim Society*" that the assumption that Madurese people are 100 percent Muslim while non-Muslims are not Madurese have unknowingly lost the identity of a group of Madurese who is Christians who have lived in Sumber Pakem, East Java. The cause of this loss of identity is due to the lack of interaction between the Muslim majority group and the Christian minority in Madura on the one hand and the distrust of the Christian minority group in Madura to assert their identity in the public sphere on the other hand (Siddiq, 2019: 167-196). Perhaps the consideration of sociological risks is why the Christian minority in Madura does not dare to assert their identity, but this situation is not good to be maintained.

In the context of Muslim-Christian relations, an assertion of social identity is generally associated with women's groups. Of course, it will be difficult to distinguish between Muslim men and Christians in the male group. However, for women, because the headscarf is a symbol that is identified with Muslim women, the identification of Muslim-Christian women is not difficult, especially in societies where the rules for controlling their bodies are stringent. The phenomenon of controlling the body through the agenda of formalizing shari'a as is the case in Aceh is a separate segmentation of the manifestation of strengthening Islamic conservatism in Indonesia (Sebastian & Nubowo, 2019; Qodir et al., 2022: 63-90). That means the strength of Islamic culture in Indonesia is not solely eyes determined by moderate Islamic groups as the mainstream. Aceh, for example, is a Muslim-majority area that is locally differentiated because it does not receive strong influence from mainstream Islam such as NU and Muhammadiyah.

Even though Aceh is a Sharia area, the attitude of the Christian minority in Muslim-Christian relations there is not like the Madurese Christians, as stated above. The Acehese Christian minority group has gone through a long phase in the context of asserting identity. Again, women are positioned as the instrument facilitating the

identification process between Muslim and Christian groups in Aceh. In this part of the article, the female figure becomes the actor highlighted in the struggle to affirm Christian identity in Aceh, especially in an atmosphere of upholding the formalization of Shari'a, which necessitates strict body discipline (Foucault, 1995) for women.

Miss Dista Br. Tambunan, for example, is a North Sumatra teacher at SD Negeri Alur Pinang Langsa Timur. He is old, about 55 years old. His long tenure in Langsa made him blend in more with the local population. Her Aceh language is fluent, her appearance is exactly like a Muslim woman, and don't be surprised if when you say "Islamic greetings" to her, she will answer the same greeting with a more fluent greeting. It is complicated for anyone who does not know him to know whether he is Christian, mainly because of her daily style, which always wears a headscarf whenever she goes to teach. The simple house where he lives at the school location until now shows that he has won a place in the hearts of the Acehnese. As he often said: "We are Batak people, when we arrive in Aceh we have to be able to Aceh ourselves" (D. Tambunan, personal communication, July 26, 2022).

Her habit of wearing the headscarf may be one of how she can adapt to the local population. In the interview, he said: Since I set foot in Langsa, I have been wearing the headscarf. Especially during the bad times in Aceh (red: the GAM era), raids were everywhere, and I never removed my headscarf. Because I'm used to it, even though now in Langsa it's free for Christians not to wear the headscarf, it's hard for me to let go. That is precisely what I'm afraid of, if this headscarf is removed, people will look strange to me. Especially my students at school. I'm afraid no one will recognize me anymore" (D. Tambunan, personal communication, July 26, 2022)

Like Bu Dista, Eva Ratu Gea did the same thing in Banda Aceh. He said in an interview, "When the city of Banda Aceh was busy with hijab raids, I always wore the headscarf everywhere. But when public spaces began to be comfortable for people who were not wearing the headscarf, I immediately returned to my original identity as a Christian woman who is not wearing the hijab. I do this to show my alignment with the importance of affirming the identity of each social group. Behaving like a Muslimah is a hypocrisy that Christian women should not do in Aceh. Moreover, this action is detrimental to themselves as Christian and Muslims because they cannot distinguish between Muslim women and Christian women" (E. R. Gea, personal communication, June 16, 2022).



Suppose we link the statements of the two female respondents above with James C. Scott's (2000) resistance theory. In that case, it can be concluded that the resistance pattern of Christian women in Aceh in asserting identity is divided into two phases, first, the hidden transcript resistance phase that occurs during the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and several years after. The phenomenon of "Salib di Balik Jilbab" in Ansor's research (2013) or other terms he uses the term "Seperti Beragama Lain" (Ansor, 2016: 11-30) is a concrete example of how the Christian minority still maintains its Christian identity hidden even in public areas. They wear headscarves. Second, the phase of public transcript occurred in the contemporary Aceh era, namely in the last ten years. Especially in the last five years, several cases that occurred during raids demonstrated the courage of the Christian minority in asserting their Christian identity openly.

This can be witnessed in several public spaces of schools and universities in Aceh. At the University of Ocean (UNSAM), the author observed that Christian female students who were not wearing headscarves were passing by. Their expressions were normal. Even though their appearance differs from Muslim students who incidentally wear the hijab, they don't feel ashamed or insecure about themselves. Not infrequently, the author also finds them walking to campus together with female students in headscarves, telling stories while occasionally joking around. The courage of minorities to carry out open resistance in asserting this identity is an advance in the progress of tolerance in the land of Shari'a, Aceh. This simultaneously emphasizes that the future of religious tolerance or moderation in Indonesia cannot only be realized by affirming the wisdom of the majority group but also requires resistance from minority groups, both in the form of hidden transcripts and public transcripts. In a society with an absolute majority like Aceh, the absence of resistance will open space for the domination of a wider superordinate group, thereby disrupting the existence of subordinate groups. This model can also be applied in other areas in Indonesia where the majority of adherents of certain religions are absolute, such as North Tapanuli Regency, where the majority are Christians.<sup>2</sup> The struggle for the right to study religion alone.

When referring to the three theories of religious education, as stated by Jack Seymour (1997) and Tabitha Kartika Christiani (Christiani, 2009: 173-91), namely in the well (learning one's religion), at the well (learning other religions), and beyond the well (cooperation between religious adherents in the context of upholding justice, peace, and social harmonization), the problematic of religious education in Indonesia according to

M. Agus Nuryatno is because it is dominated by the first model, namely in the healthy (Nuryatno, 2011: 422-431). In fact, in a plural society like Indonesia, according to him, the proper implementation of religious education is beyond the well: an education that leads to the meeting of universal inter-religious values that is produced to fight common enemies, namely corruption, poverty, ignorance, discrimination, and other crimes. However, it is different from Aceh, especially among the Christian minority, they find it challenging to get their religious education (in the well). Few have to volunteer to study other people's religions (at the well) without learning their religion (in the well).

Parents are the most disappointed figure to accept this fact. Parents are willing to let their children go to school, of course, with the belief that they will not only be taught general sciences but also receive religious education at their respective schools. Through religious education, they believe that their children will become human beings who are strong in faith and have noble characters. However, when the opposite reality occurs, where their children receive religious education that is not following their religion, it raises strong concerns for parents about religious conversions among their children. This situation seems unfair, especially after it was emphasized in the 2003 National Education System Law article 12 concerning the obligation to receive religious education according to each religion's teachings and taught by teachers of the same religion.

However, Raihani (2016: 1-26), in his writing entitled *Minority Right to Attend Religious Education in Indonesia* also reads that there is a possibility of a discrepancy between the ideals contained in the law and the reality that occurs in the public sphere of education in Indonesia. In general, this ideal is practiced in many areas of Indonesia, but in certain areas, certain groups' rights to religious education are often neglected. Raihani's study of four cases highlighting religious education in schools for minorities shows the vulnerability of micro and macro minorities to discrimination by the majority group. Three of the four cases studied experienced disturbances, especially regarding learning facilities at school. Some groups among the minorities in the school are powerless to carry out resistance and struggle for rights. However, one case shows the opposite situation, where the majority group is subordinated.

The study that the author conducted in Aceh, where the research locus focused on three cities, namely Langsa, Lokaumawe, and Banda Aceh, showed that religious education for minorities was not adequately provided in the three public universities and schools in the three cities. Christian minority groups in the three cities are faced with two

choices: to study religion from the pastor at their respective churches or to attend Islamic religious education like other Muslims. Of course, there is no better choice between the two options. However, studying with a priest and getting religious value from him is at least not as bad as the first choice. Historically the second option emerged recently following the struggle for the rights of minority groups. Charles Taylor said this situation requires what is called political recognition of the rights of groups that are powerless or powerless which is caused by misrecognition or non-recognition of this group so that there is the potential for oppression, subordination, and discrimination against them (Taylor, 1994: 25-73).

If Muhammad Ansor (2015b: 59-83) in his writing *Being Women in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh*, using hidden transcript theory James Scott found hidden transcripts of women against efforts to control the body in Langsa, Aceh, this paper finds that there is a public transcript from, borrowing Scott's explanation, namely between subordinate class groups to superordinate class groups (Scott, 1987: 419; Scott, 2000: 383) regarding the implementation of religious education following their respective religions. Even more interesting is that this resistance was driven by a Christian woman from North Sumatra named Eva Ratu Gea. Among the Christian students who attended a state university in Banda Aceh, Eva Ratu Gea was the only person who dared to take the unpopular route to protest, demanding the right to religious education openly.

Eva Ratu Gea as a Christian student at a state university in Banda Aceh, told how she fought for minority rights on the campus.

*"Ketika itu saya gerah melihat umat Kristen kok harus belajar agama Islam di kampus. Tidak ada satupun diantara teman-teman Kristen yang berani untuk protes. Saya tau, batin mereka juga merasakan yang sama dengan saya. Tetapi karena mereka minoritas di kampung orang, mereka lebih memilih sikap diam. Namun saya tidak mau seperti mereka. Saya memberanikan diri untuk melakukan protes di kampus. Ia melayangkan surat protes dan melakukan komunikasi interpersonal dengan berbagai pemangku jabatan di kampus, termasuk para dosen. Ternyata setelah saya komunikasikan dengan beberapa dosen, diantara mereka ada juga yang memberikan support (dukungan). Berkat itu pula, meskipun kami belum mendapatkan pendidikan agama sesuai agama masing-masing dan diajarkan oleh guru yang seagama, setidaknya kami tidak lagi diwajibkan untuk belajar agama Islam. Belajar ke pendeta di gereja merupakan salah satu pilihan alternatif ketika itu. Bahkan saya juga pernah melakukan protes terhadap pemberlakuan kewajiban kemampuan baca alquran kepada non muslim yang dilakukan oleh pihak UP3I di kampus tersebut. Dalam proses perjuangan ini, saya mengalami rintangan yang sangat berat. Saya tidak peduli dengan berbagai resiko yang akan saya terima. Syukurnya, apa yang saya perjuangkan berhasil, meskipun belum maksimal" (E. R. Gea, personal communication, June 16, 2022).*

In James C. Scott's theory of resistance, what Eva fought for can be categorized as public transcript (Scott, 2000). This can be seen from the attitude of Eva Ratu Gea, who carried out systemic and formalistic resistance, involved other people, especially officeholders, was oriented towards change, and was of national and public interest. The movement may only be carried out individually. Still, many parties can feel the implications, not only the Muslim minority in Aceh but also Muslim authorities who align with the spirit of the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003. Why? Because there are not a few Muslim groups who want the full fulfillment of the rights of Christian minorities in Muslim-majority areas.

In the context of state policy, the recent agenda of revitalizing religious moderation is relevant to the act of resistance championed by Eva Ratu Gea above. On the political aspect, Rizky Alif Alvian and Irfan Ardhani's reading (2023: 31-70) considers the use of moderation discourse by the ruling regime (President Joko Widodo) to weaken the influence of Islamists who are political rivals so that challenges can be neutralized and their political strength increased. solid, legit presented. However, religious moderation in this discussion is understood as a religious attitude that maintains a balance between practicing one's religion (exclusive) with respect for different religious practices and beliefs (inclusive). This attitude is a middle way that prevents falling into excessive reactions and attitudes such as extremism, fanaticism, and revolutionism in the practice of religious teachings. In other words, the religious moderation referred to in this case is a solution in responding to the two extreme poles of religion: between ultraconservative or right-wing on the one hand, and liberal on the extreme left-wing on the other side (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2021: 18).

Because religious moderation in the Islamic context is also seen as a pure concept that shows the substance of Islamic teachings such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (grace to all of nature), then Muslim-majority areas like Aceh, for example, are the most comfortable home for non-Muslims. The theological evidence of Islamic tolerance towards other religions that is undeniable is the narrative *lakum dinukum waliyadin* (for you your religion and me my religion) in the Koran (Sura al-kafirun) which, according to Quraish Shihab, emphasizes the prohibition on attempts to compromise between religions and not to disturb fellow believers (Shihab, 2004: 573). Not to mention the historical facts at the time of the Prophet when he visited Medina. He found the community there in a plural form

(Muslims, non-Muslims, and Jews) (Mubarakfuri, 2002: 15). But the Prophet built a peace agreement with them during his leadership. Even the community built at that time was very tolerant and cooperative with each other (Usairy, 2003: 105).

The classic reason for the absence of Christian religious teachers in Aceh cannot be used as a basis for not implementing religious education according to students' religion. Especially if it is based on the reasons for undermining the faith of Muslims and the missionary agenda, these concerns seem excessive and not in line with Islamic teachings. At least three reasons require the Government to provide religious teachers for minorities in majority areas such as Aceh. *First*, implementing religious education according to students' religion is a mandate of the law which must be carried out without exception. *Second*, one of the manifestations of religious moderation in educational institutions in Indonesia is to provide religious education according to their religion for all religious groups. While the *third*, Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia, opens up space for accommodation for minority rights. Based on these three things, the central government opened a special route for appointing non-Muslim religious teacher civil servants in Aceh, or conversely the appointment of Islamic religious teacher civil servants in non-Muslim majority areas without waiting for submissions from the regions.

### **Women as Moderation Agents**

Conceptually, religious moderation is not fully understood by the people of Indonesia. However, efforts to mainstream it have been felt in recent years, especially directly commanded by the Ministry of Religion. Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal mentioned that there was an agenda for mainstreaming religious moderation in several universities in Indonesia. One of the things that the two of them highlighted the most was the substance of the curriculum which is eclectic in nature by emphasizing the values of religious moderation such as tolerance, national commitment, accommodating to local culture, and non-violence (Nasir & Rijal, 2021: 213-241).

These four values are also the main values in the concept of religious moderation which the Ministry of Religion resonates. At least these four values serve as indicators and parameters in measuring the practice of religious moderation in various places and regions. The first is a national commitment, for example, how to see what forms of loyalty a community has toward national consensus. Second, how to measure tolerance through attitudes of openness, inclusiveness, voluntarism, and acceptance of differences. This tolerance is a very important value to emphasize because Indonesia is multicultural and

promotes democratic values. The derivative of this tolerance will be seen in how the nation's citizens accept other people who are different because of differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and customs. The third is how to see forms of accommodation towards the local religious traditions of a society. In other words, something can be called moderate if it is friendly toward local religious traditions. Meanwhile, the fourth is how to minimize the attitude of religious extremism, which gives rise to radical actions such as the movement to change the socio-political order of the country instantly towards a religious state. Radicalism displayed can be verbal, physical, and mental (Tim Penyusun, 2019).

There is nothing more to debate about the concept of religious moderation. In Islam itself, religious moderation has a strong backing on Wasatiyah Islamic terminology. This term is very emphatically mentioned by Allah in the Qur'an Surah al-Baqarah verse 143: "Thus we make you *ummatan wasatan*." The meaning of *ummatan wasatan* in this verse is the middle line or religious balance without any extreme religious understanding and practice. The agenda for revitalizing religious moderation or Wasatiyah Islam has the right momentum amidst the strong stigma spread by the West that Islam is synonymous with radicalism and extremism. In other words, the agenda of religious moderation in Islam wants to reaffirm that Islam is not as alleged. On the contrary, Islam is a religion that is peaceful, friendly, and *rahmatan l'alam* (a mercy to all of nature) (Helmy et al., 2021: 377-401; Zainuddin & Esha, 2016: 75).

But the problem is not that simple. There are still many internal Muslims who do not fully understand it. Not even a few are antipathy. So, it is necessary to socialize deeper and wider with a simple narrative so that it is easy for the public to understand. Presumably, based on the results of the research above, using functionalism theory, the gene group that is more functional in the role of carrying out the agenda of religious moderation is women, both as a minority and majority group, in the portion of resistance and socialization. There are at least four reasons why women are more effective in carrying out their functions in the agenda of religious moderation.

*First*, the intensity of interpersonal communication for women is higher than for men. An evolutionary biologist from the University of Oxford named Robin Dunbar observed 30 men and women ranging from children to adults. His observations, presented at the annual meeting of *the American Association for the Advancement of Science* in Boston, Massachusetts, say that hanging out at cafes has serious implications for male friendship reactions. In contrast to women who maintain the intensity of communication or the

frequency of communication among themselves (Priherdityo, 2017). That means that the intensity of communication of religious moderation, both in the form of resistance and socialization, will be more effective if left to women or women than men. *Second*, women's voices are louder than men's in demanding or voicing their rights. Even in contemporary political dynamics in Indonesia, especially the last two elections, it shows that "the power of emak-emak" is a political force that is very calculated and reckoned with. *Third*, women have exoticism that men don't have. Evidently, in today's social media era, influencers are dominated by women. Because the work of religious moderation is an effort to influence the public, women are the frontline agents. Not only female influencers from religious figures but female influencers in general need to be packaged in such a way that interesting content regarding religious moderation. Meanwhile, fourthly, because women have so far been positioned as a "soft social group", the risk of resistance to various resistance movements carried out by women will be very small. So placing women as agents of religious moderation will minimize the risk of resistance.

Men have been associated as a social group that is brave, mighty, and a symbol of virility, while women are synonymous with gentleness so hard work is addressed only to men, it turns out this is no longer true in the present era. This is because, in terms of quantity, women have not only increased in entering male areas, but they can also compete with these men. Professions such as the military and police, construction workers, loading and unloading workers, pedicab drivers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and parking attendants are mostly filled by women. In the world of education, the quantity of women has also increased, including in Islamic educational institutions (Kull, 2012).

On the scale of Aceh, the role of women in socio-political life cannot be doubted. Since the pre-independence era, Acehnese women have been involved in fighting for the independence of this country. Cut Nyak Dien, for example, is an Acehnese warrior whose name is well-recorded in the history of heroism in the archipelago. Even in portraits of contemporary Aceh, women often adorn the socio-political public space. In Banda Aceh itself, it was led by a female Mayor named Illiza Sa'aduddin Djamal. City public spaces in Langsa and Banda Aceh show the participation of women in various professional activities including parking attendants. This shows that Acehnese women are not figures of antiques mirrored in their respective homes. On the contrary, they often operate as engines of sociology and change. So what Eva Ratu Gea did as a representative of the Christian minority group inspired the spirit of progressive Acehnese women.

## CONCLUSION

In areas that enforce the implementation of Islamic law, such as Aceh, efforts to implement religious moderation face their challenges. This is because the people of Aceh are predominantly Muslim, with strict and rigid religious traditions. Minority groups in this area need resistance measures in fighting for their rights, especially in educational institutions. Through research in two cities in Aceh, namely Langsa and Banda Aceh, based on interview data with Eva Ratu Gea and Dista Br. Tambunan accompanied by field observations, it was found that women are the most functional actors from Christian minority groups in playing resistance efforts against struggles. rights in educational institutions that are there.

The discussion above shows that the resistance of Christian women in educational institutions in Aceh can be seen from two things, first, resistance in asserting Christian identity, which is carried out in two phases, namely hidden transcript and public transcript. The phase of closed resistance occurred during the period of strict body disciplinary raids in Aceh, so few Christian women had to wear the hijab or head scarf in public educational spaces in Aceh. Second, the phase of open resistance can be observed through the portrait of the contemporary Acehnese education public space in recent years, where Christian women have dared to openly go to school or campus (university) without the hijab. The second resistance of Christian women can also be observed through the struggle in demanding the right to study religion according to their religion. Eva Ratu Gea's struggle at a university in Banda Aceh shows that a movement driven by women in an open (public transcript) is far more effective and functional. Although the data sources in this research are limited to two key informants, at least they represent the general reality of the minority of Christian women in Aceh.

Furthermore, this research can be used as initial material for conducting more in-depth research. At least based on the results of this simple research, it shows that the face of religious moderation in Aceh in general still does not meet the ideal criteria of the central government's expectations. But this reality at the same time corrects the perspective on the universality of the concept of religious moderation. This means that each region has a tendency of cultural locality that influences the practice of religious moderation in that area. In addition, this research recommends that the Ministry of Religion through its



staff encourage the formation of religious moderation facilitators from among women in all religions in Aceh specifically and Indonesia in general.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdullah, A. (2020). *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, & Transdisiplin, Metode Studi Agama dan Studi Islam di Era Kontemporer*. PT Litera Cahaya Bangsa.
- Alvian, R. A., & Ardhani, I. (2023). the Politics of Moderate Islam in Indonesia: Between International Pressure and Domestic Contestations. *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 61, no. 1, 31–70. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.31-70>.
- Ansor, M. (2013). *Salib Dibalik Jilbab: Politik Representasi dan Negosiasi Identitas Perempuan Kristen Langsa*. Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan Kementerian Agama RI.
- Ansor, M. (2014). “Kita Kan Beda!”: Persamaan Remaja Perempuan Muslim dan Kristen di Langsa, Aceh. *Jurnal Multikultural Dan Multireligius*, Vol. 13 No. 2.
- Ansor, M. (2015a). Being Woman in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 52(1), 59. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.521.59-83>
- Ansor, M. (2015b). Being Woman in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 52(1), 59. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.521.59-83>
- Ansor, M. (2016). ‘Menjadi Seperti Beragama Lain’: Jilbab dan Identitas Hibrid Mahasiswa Kristen Aceh. *Jurnal PENAMAS*, 29, Nomor 1, 11–30.
- Ansor, M., & Amri, Y. (2020). Being Christians in the Acehnese Way: Illiberal Citizenship and Women’s Agency in the Islamic Public Sphere. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 14 No. 01.
- Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI. (2021). *Religious Moderation*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.
- Christiani, T. K. (2009). “Christian Education for Peacebuilding in the Pluralistic Indonesian Context” in *Religion, Civil Society and Conflict in Indonesia*. LIT VERLAG GmbH&Co.KG Wien.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books.
- Gea, E. R. (2022, June 16). *Wawancara* [Personal communication].
- Helmy, M. I., Jumadil Kubro, A. D., & Ali, M. (2021). The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (wasatiyyah al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-religious relations in

- the Javanese Pesantrens. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 11(2), 351–376. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.351-376>
- Kull, A. (2012). Gender Awareness in Islamic Education: The Pioneering Case of Indonesia in a Comparison with Pakistan. *Studia Islamika*, 19(3). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v19i3.354>
- Miles, & Huberman. (1992). *Analisis Data Kualitatif*. Universitas Indonesia Press.
- Moleong, Lexy. J. (1990). *Metodelogi Penelitian Kualitatif: Perumusan Masalah Analisis*. PT. Rosda Mulia.
- Mubarakfuri, S. S. al-. (2002). *Tarikh al-Madinah al-Munawwarah*. Darussalam.
- Nasir, M., & Rijal, M. K. (2021). Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 11(2), 213–241. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>
- Ni'am, S. (2015). Pesantren: The miniature of moderate Islam in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 5(1), 111. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v5i1.111-134>
- Nuryatno, M. A. (2011). Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 49(2), 411–431. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2011.492.411-431>
- Onghokham. (1993). *Pluralisme Agama dalam Perspektif Sejarah*. Dian Interfidei.
- Parhan, M., Nugraha, R. H., & Fajar Islamy, M. R. (2022). Model of Religious Moderation In Universities: Alternative Solutions To Liberal, Literal And Radical Islam. *Edukasia Islamika*, 7(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v7i1.5218>
- Priherdityo, E. (2017, Pebruari). Sebab Ilmiah Nongkrong Penting Bagi Pria. *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20170222133450-277-195304/sebab-ilmiah-nongkrong-penting-bagi-pri>
- Qodir, Z., Jubba, H., Hidayati, M., & Mutiarin, D. (2022). The Formalization of Sharia in Aceh to Discipline the Female Body. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 60(1), 63–90. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2022.601.63-90>
- Raihani, R. (2016). Minority Right to Attend Religious Education in Indonesia. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 53(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2015.531.1-26>

- Scott, J. C. (1987). "Resistance without Protest and without Organization: Peasant Opposition to the Islamic Zakat and the Christian Tithe." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29, no. 03, 419.
- Scott, J. C. (2000). *Senjatanya Orang-Orang yang Kalah: Bentuk-Bentuk Perlawanan Sehari-Hari Kaum Tani*, terj. A. Rahman Zainuddin, dkk. Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Sebastian, L. C., & Nubowo, A. (2019). "The 'Conservative Turn' in Indonesian Islam: Implications for the 2019 Presidential Elections." *Asie Visions*, 106.
- Seymour (ed.), J. L. (1997). *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning*. Abingdon Press.
- Shihab, M. Q. (2004). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah (XV)*. Lentera.
- Siddiq, A. (2019). Madurese Christian: In Search of Christian Identity within Muslim Society. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 57(1), 167–196.  
<https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2019.571.167-196>
- Sugiyono. (2009). *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif*. Alfabeta.
- Tambunan, D. (2022, July 26). *Wawancara* [Personal communication].
- Taylor, C. (1994). "The Politics of Recognition", in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton University Press.
- Tim Penyusun. (2019). *Moderasi Beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.
- Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI. (2019). *Moderasi Beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.
- Usairy, A. al-. (2003). *Sejarah Islam: Sejak Zaman Nabi Adam hingga Abad XX*, terj. H. Samson Rahman. Akbar Media Eka Sarana.
- Zainuddin, M., & Esha, M. I. (2016). *Islam Moderat: Konsepsi, Interpretasi, dan Aksi*. UIN Maliki Press.

